

UPDATE

Are You Getting Enough Fiber?

Usually, ingredients in foods that are good for you are absorbed and used by your body to function properly and keep you healthy. Fiber, an important part of a healthy diet, is different. Although fiber is not absorbed and passes through the digestive system largely intact, it is a very important part of good digestive health and protects against other serious diseases, such as heart disease and cancer. Fiber is found only in plant foods, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and seeds.

What is Fiber?

Fiber is the components of plants (such as fruits, vegetables, and grains) that the body does not digest. There are two types of dietary fiber - soluble, which forms a gel when mixed with liquid, and insoluble, which does not.

How Much do you Need?

The recommended daily intake of fiber is 20 to 35 grams each day. As examples, a 1/2-cup serving of bran flake cereal has 5.5 grams and an unpeeled pear has 4.5 grams of fiber. As much as possible, this amount should come from foods high in fiber, rather than supplements.

What Does it Do?

Both soluble and insoluble fiber are an important part of a healthy diet because they aid normal bowel function and help maintain regularity. In addition, soluble fiber, when part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, has been associated with a reduced risk of certain cancers, diabetes, digestive disorders and heart disease. Foods high in soluble fiber include oat bran, oatmeal, beans, peas, rice bran, barley and citrus fruits. Foods high in insoluble fiber include whole-wheat breads, wheat cereals, wheat bran, rye, whole-grain rice, barley, cabbage, carrots and brussels sprouts.

For more information contact the following organizations:

American Dietetic Association
Consumer Nutrition Hot Line
(800) 366-1655

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
Food Guide Pyramid
(800) 687-2258



STATE HEALTH PLAN PREVENTION PARTNERS
South Carolina Budget and Control Board
Employee Insurance Program
March 2003

